

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to oppose passage of HB597. While I respect the intentions of its author, I see it as an invitation for Montana communities and counties to enact ordinances that exceed the limits of what has been determined to be Constitutional. The smaller the governing body, the less experience they will have with such a sensitive issue, and the more likely they are to be influenced by those with an agenda to enact the most restrictive laws possible. The first time they attempt to apply such a law, it will be challenged, at considerable cost to the taxpayers. Frequently, such laws are struck down as overbroad and an infringement of citizens' free expression rights. That was certainly our experience here in Ravalli County, and the cost to the taxpayers was substantial.

I understand that it is difficult to say no to a measure that is intended to protect minors from sexually explicit material, but what is "harmful to minors" is a sensitive line, varying from individual to individual, that should rightfully be drawn and enforced by parents, not by state or local lawmakers.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this measure.

Russ Lawrence
512 Blodgett Camp Road
Hamilton, MT 59840
363-1279